

Message sent to unscrupulous coin dealers

By Roger Boye

Coin dealers who use deception or fraud could face hefty fines and imprisonment under a new bill in Congress.

"Most dealers are scrupulous. Unfortunately, the rising interest in coins as an investment has also seen a corresponding rise in the number of schemes," said U. S. Rep. Frank Annunzio (D., Ill.) when he introduced the proposal in late June.

Among other things, the legislation would make illegal:

- fraud, misrepresentation or the omission of key facts in the sale or trade of coins, bullion or numismatic items;

- the manufacture and sale of replicas of U. S. coins and currency unless the duplicates are clearly and permanently marked "copy";

- the use of a business name that could suggest the seller is connected with, or has the approval of, Uncle Sam.

The bill has little chance of becoming law in the current session of Congress, according to Kenneth E. Swab, counsel for the House Subcommittee on Con-

sumer Affairs and Coinage, which is chaired by Annunzio. But Swab said Annunzio decided to introduce the bill anyway "to get reaction and send a message."

"Perhaps the industry will take note and increase its efforts at self-policing," Swab said.

The bill would strengthen existing laws, which Annunzio said are "generally weak, cumbersome, and offer little deterrence to the actors and little relief to the victims" of coin-sale fraud.